

Dear SCN Editor,

Columbus Schools should make building an auditorium a priority because it would not only benefit the student body but the community as well.

In a survey of Stillwater County residents, we found that 40% people believe that building an auditorium would absolutely benefit the community and school, and 47% believe that it would somewhat benefit community and school. 87% of community members who responded to our survey supported the addition of an auditorium.

We also have asked teachers and staff within the school about this issue. Everyone we spoke to said that an auditorium would be an excellent idea. Mr. Kapor, our band director, stated that, "If we had enough money to build a football stadium, then we have enough money to build an auditorium." Mr. McKay, our high school principal, also stated that, "It would be a good idea if not for the cost factor."

While it is true that an auditorium is a costly project, we have an idea to cut the cost tremendously. Instead of building an entirely new foundation, we could repurpose a current structure. District-hired consultants have proposed that the district move the middle school to its own separate campus next to the new hospital complex. With that in mind, a decent portion of the current middle school/high school complex would be open to new renovation. The middle school gym would be a sufficient amount of space to build a decent auditorium. This auditorium would be able to fit 450 people comfortably. There would be aisles around the perimeter and through the middle. The stage would take up 800 sqft with adequate storage space to either side of the stage. We also considered creating a walkway from the middle school boys locker room to the band room which then connects to the middle school gym. With all this in mind, our plan would cut down on spending. Necessities such as sewer, electricity and water, are already connected to the building.

Community residents responding to our survey suggested that a new auditorium could be used by many school organizations as well as community organizations. Several of the school organizations include Speech/Drama/Debate, our school play, musical performances put on by the school band and choir, school fundraisers, guest speakers and regional teacher trainings. Other organizations possibly interested include the Stillwater Youth Center, Missoula Children's Theater, several churches in our community, the annual Miss Stillwater Pageant, community musical performances, community fundraisers, Stillwater Mine trainings, and movie performances.

We believe that the auditorium would have more than enough functions to consider the project worth the money. We've found out that the school has previously spent over a half million dollars of its "Metal to Minds" money to build our football stadium. Maybe future "Metal to Minds" money could go to paying for the auditorium. An auditorium is essential for growth of both the community and the school. It will provide many school and community organizations necessary space to work, perform, and learn.

Sincerely,
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